



Kerr, G., & Drennan, J. (2009). Same but different: Perceptions of IMC amongst marketing communication partners in Australia. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 15(?).

Copyright 2009 Routledge

Same but different - Perceptions of IMC amongst marketing communication partners in Australia

Same but different - Perceptions of IMC amongst marketing communication partners in Australia

by Dr Gayle Kerr and

Associate Professor Judy Drennan

Abstract:

This paper examines whether two key partners in the marketing communication process, advertising and public relations' practitioners perceive IMC in the same way. It compares perceptions across a wide range of implementation, organizational and strategic issues in IMC to test if perceptions have moved past Stage 1 of IMC development (Schultz and Kitchen 2000). Although both advertising and PR practitioners concur with each other and the literature on a wide range of perceptions of IMC, they still believe that advertising and public relations practitioners have dissimilar views about IMC. PR practitioners position themselves as a separate breed of marketing communicator, requiring divergent skills from advertising practitioners and thinking differently about IMC.

Key words: Integrated Marketing Communications, Advertising Practitioners, Public Relations Practitioners

Author details:

Gayle Kerr, PhD Queensland University of Technology
Senior Lecturer, School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations
Queensland University of Technology, 2 George Street, Brisbane. Qld 4000 Australia
Email: gf.kerr@qut.edu.au

Judy Drennan, PhD Deakin University
Associate Professor, School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations
Queensland University of Technology
2 George Street, Brisbane. Queensland 4000 Australia
Email: j.drennan@qut.edu.au

Same but different - Perceptions of IMC amongst marketing communication partners in Australia

The first integrated marketing communication (IMC) studies began by exploring perceptions of IMC (Caywood, Schultz and Wang, 1991; Duncan and Everett, 1993). It continues to be an important area of research as IMC strategies become more sophisticated and an understanding of how IMC works even more vital. These perceptions also have considerable impact on IMC implementation (Swain, 2004), which links to organizational effectiveness. The study of the perceptions of clients and marketing communication agencies has helped define the discipline, by comparing the commonality and disparity in perceptions of IMC. In this paper, IMC is defined as “a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted relevant external and internal audiences” (Schultz and Schultz, 2004).

More than a decade of research has presented the perceptions of IMC of the client organization, the marketing communication agency and academics. Prior research has compared these perceptions to find shared understanding and points of difference. It has used this to expand our definitions and enrich our practice. Yet there is limited research that explores the perceptions of IMC among the different marketing communication partners (Rose and Miller, 1994; Eagle, Kitchen, and Hyde, 1999; Kitchen, Schultz, Kim Han, and Li, 2004).

The goal of this paper is to ascertain whether two key partners in the marketing communication process, advertising and public relations practitioners perceive IMC in

the same way. In doing so, we seek to examine perceptions across a wide range of implementation and organizational issues, canvassed in much of the existing research. Moreover, this paper examines strategic issues such as brand equity, strategy and level of integration, to test if perceptions have moved past the functional coordination of IMC or what Schultz and Kitchen (2000) describe as Stage 1 of IMC development. Finally, it investigates the changing roles of advertising and public relations and the turf battles and future prospects of the two.

This research is important as it extends and enhances our existing understanding of IMC. Specifically, it builds on previous work in definitional issues by analyzing the differences in the shared understanding and perceptions of IMC between marketing communication partners. An understanding of these differences may help resolve coordination problems, reduce marketing communication silos and improve organizational efficiency. It may also empower advertising agencies and public relations firms to proceed from a shared understanding of the IMC discipline. This has valuable benefits for client organizations and advertising and public relations practitioners. In addition, it may enrich IMC theory by providing a more holistic picture of the organizational issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW: PERCEPTIONS OF IMC

Given that perceptions of IMC have been the most researched stream in the IMC discipline (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999; Low, 2000; Swain, 2004; Kitchen, Spickett-Jones, and Grimes, 2007), the literature review begins by tracking the evolution of client

perceptions of IMC. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on research undertaken after 1990.

The first study of IMC perceptions of US national goods advertisers by Caywood, Schultz and Wang in 1991 showed that companies were already valuing and supporting IMC. More than three-quarters of respondents felt that the client should direct IMC and 67% claimed to be implementing IMC. This was followed by perhaps the most well known of the early studies: Duncan and Everett's 1993 survey of US communication and marketing managers. The authors affirmed the value of IMC amongst clients, citing less media wastage and the ability to gain a competitive edge as the main reasons for implementation. They also examined clients' perceptions of the role of advertising agencies, and found 57% believed that advertising agencies should share responsibilities for IMC, with half of those employed already handling more than one marketing communication function.

These initial studies demonstrated that IMC was valued, although little understood and implemented. It was originally considered that IMC should be directed by the client with the agencies perhaps having some tactical involvement. By the mid 1990s, implementation of IMC had increased, with 75% of US marketing managers reporting some degree of implementation (Phelps, Plumley, and Johnson, 1994). At this stage, IMC was believed to be a practical and growing reality and many organizations had appointed an IMC manager to coordinate multiple communication tasks (McArthur and Griffin, 1997; Low, 2000). Its perception was still functional, rather than strategic, and was seen as a coordination of marketing communication tasks (Low, 2000). Full service advertising agencies were the main supplier of creative and media needs, but many other

marketing communication functions such as direct marketing or PR were handled in-house (McArthur and Griffin, 1997).

By the late 1990s, advertising practitioners, especially in smaller agencies, began to be more involved in the IMC process, devoting more man hours to IMC (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997). Advertising was thought to be the most integrated discipline, perhaps building on its historical tradition of handling multiple marketing communication tasks, while PR was viewed as the least integrated discipline (Kitchen and Schultz, 1998). The organizational shift towards IMC was reported to come from corporate, marketing then advertising and sales (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997). This is likely to have been driven by the shift in organizational spending away from traditional mass media advertising to below-the-line (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999). The growing implementation of IMC was hampered by questions of measurement and compensation (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997; Kitchen and Schultz, 1999). These remain the two key issues today.

In a multi-country comparison of advertising practitioner perceptions of IMC, Kitchen and Schultz (1999) found that in the US, UK and New Zealand one-quarter to three-quarters of advertising agencies devote 25% of their working hours to IMC and 31% spent half their time on IMC. In Australia and India, the time devoted to IMC was less with a quarter of advertising agencies spending over 25% of their time on IMC. In both the US and Australia, the budget for IMC appeared to come from small agencies spending more time on IMC (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999).

There was strong agreement from agency people that IMC increases impact, creativity and communication consistency (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997), and often the most effort was devoted to creative (Gould, Lerman, and Grein, 1999). There was also

strong belief that IMC represented conceptual, practical changes and was not a fad (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999).

In trying to elicit the big picture from the perceptions of both clients and agencies, Schultz and Kitchen (2000) developed a four stage model of IMC development. Their research cited earlier (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999; Schultz and Kitchen, 1997) suggests that most firms are in Stage 1 or Stage 2. Stage 1 is described as the *Tactical Coordination of IMC*, which is led by the client and its external agencies and requires a high degree of cross-functional communication and cooperation. Stage 2 is *Redefining the Scope of Marketing Communications*, where firms start the marketing communication process with the customer. Stage 3 involves the *Application of Information Technology*, building databases and incorporating that data into planning. The final stage, Stage 4 is *Financial and Strategic Integration*, where marketing communication is measured against ROI and data becomes customer knowledge and market understanding.

Another area of research into perceptions of IMC involves comparing the perceptions of client and agency or advertising and PR practitioners. A study by Rose and Miller (1994) was the first to compare the perceptions of advertising and PR practitioners to IMC. It found that both practitioners support IMC as a practical and necessary reality. Although they believed both advertising and PR required different skills sets, they acknowledged the need to augment skills in the role of a communication generalist. Replicating the same study in Latin America, Rose (1996) found similar predictions of the rise of a communication generalist, combining skills in both advertising and public relations. While they also agreed that IMC was a practical reality, their level of commitment in the new discipline was not as strong as their US counterparts.

In terms of shared understanding of IMC, a number of studies report concurrence between advertising and PR practitioners on a range of statements about IMC in New Zealand and the UK, (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Kitchen et al, 2004). Kitchen et al (2004) found that both advertising and PR practitioners believed that IMC was about coordinating communication disciplines, a way to organize the firm, a way to develop and direct brand strategy, delivered unified messages, coordinate advertising and PR programs and is a strategic business process. Like advertising and PR practitioners in the US and Latin America, UK advertising and PR practitioners see their role as expanding to incorporate other marketing communication activities.

In China, Kitchen and Li (2005) reported similar perceptions of IMC between advertising practitioners and PR practitioners, although advertising agencies see the strength of IMC as strategic, while PR practitioners view IMC as a more tactical application. Other countries such as New Zealand were also reported to have caught up with IMC innovators such as the UK in terms of the acceptance of IMC (Eagle, Kitchen, and Bulmer, 2007). Despite this catch-up, the authors worried that the majority of firms were stuck in Stage 1 of IMC development. This was certainly the case of IMC development in China (Kitchen and Li, 2005). In Korea, it was suggested that advertising practitioners have a better understanding of IMC than clients (Kim, Han, and Schultz, 2004). Kitchen et al (2007) also found little evidence of full adoption of IMC and cited the barriers between agencies as one of the biggest issues in IMC implementation.

Advertising and PR practitioners are often wary of working together. Kitchen et al (2004, p. 1429) note, “the greatest problem in developing and delivering integrated campaigns may well be the relationship between differing agencies attempting to work

together. Plainly one agency or the client has to accept or assume this responsibility for coordination from the start.” A number of explanations have been offered for this interdisciplinary distrust in the literature, including the view that PR is a technical support function rather than a management one (Eagle et al, 2007) or that PR is perhaps not best equipped to lead an IMC campaign (Kitchen and Li, 2005).

Table 1 summarizes the key comparisons on IMC perceptions of clients, advertising agency, PR practitioners and academics.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

These studies demonstrate a universal endorsement for IMC from clients, marketing communication practitioners and academics. There is no consensus on who leads the implementation of IMC, although mostly it appears that the client is coordinator working largely with advertising agencies who are still considered the most integrated discipline (Eagle et al, 1999; Kitchen et al, 2004; Swain, 2004; Kitchen and Li, 2005). Eagle et al (2007) suggests joint control is more desirable. Others report that business practices in certain countries contribute to this lack of consensus (Kim et al, 2004).

Measurement and compensation remain divisive issues between client and agencies, as both parties try to work out the value of the marketing communication (Eagle et al, 1999; Swain, 2004; Kitchen and Li, 2005; Eagle et al, 2007; Kitchen et al, 2007). However, an interesting point to note is that there are no significant differences between advertising and public relations practitioners and between advertising agencies and clients on their perceptions of IMC (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Kitchen et al, 2004; Kitchen and Li, 2005). All those involved in the marketing communication task appear to be like-minded in terms of what defines IMC, the organizational efficiencies it generates

and the barriers to IMC. IMC is considered a strategic and brand building process (Eagle et al, 2007; Kitchen et al, 2007), except by Chinese PR practitioners who see its application as tactical. However, the practitioners' shared understanding of IMC does not necessarily translate into an easy working relationship, with advertising and PR practitioners aware that they possess different skill sets (Rose and Miller 1994) and often reluctant to work together (Kitchen et al 2004).

Driving all of this is a need for flexibility in the way that IMC is organized, implemented and measured, so that it is adaptable to local contexts (Kitchen and Li, 2005). IMC is suggested to be situation-specific and context-dependent (Eagle et al, 2007). While the evolution in perceptions of IMC is no doubt a result of its increased implementation and growing maturity in its practice, another contributing factor could be the increased number of universities world wide offering IMC units and courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. By 2005, it was found that 196 universities and colleges in 17 countries provided educational offerings in this field (Patti, Kerr, and Schultz, 2005). In Australia alone, 32 marketing communication units are offered at undergraduate and graduate level (Kerr, Patti, and Chien, 2004).

Although perception of IMC is a well researched area, no study has examined the differences in perceptions between marketing communication partners such as advertising and public relations practitioners in Australia. It is important to address this gap in knowledge if, as Eagle et al (2007) suggest, IMC is situation specific and context dependent. It is also important because if marketing communication is to be seamlessly integrated, then the partners in the IMC process must proceed from a shared understanding of IMC.

Looking at the literature review, two studies have reported no significant differences in IMC perceptions between advertising and PR practitioners (Kitchen et al, 2004; Kitchen and Li, 2005). However, there are a number of other factors which might support a different view of IMC between these marketing communication partners.

- (a) Advertising is the most integrated discipline (Duncan and Everett, 1993; Eagle, Kitchen, and Hyde, 1999; Kitchen and Li, 2005), even in Australia (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999).
- (b) Advertising has traditionally handled marketing communication tasks other than advertising (Duncan and Everett, 1993; Kitchen et al, 2004).
- (c) Full service advertising agencies are the main suppliers of creative and media for IMC (McArthur and Griffin, 1997; Kitchen and Li, 2005).
- (d) Stronger drive for IMC coming from advertising (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997; Kitchen and Schultz, 1999; Kitchen and Li, 2005).
- (e) Suggested advertising/PR distrust in the literature (Eagle et al, 2007; Kitchen and Li, 2005).

Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H1: Advertising and Public Relations practitioners will differ in their perceptions of IMC.

However, it is expected that working in the discipline alone will not account for all perceptual differences. For example, perceptions of implementation, measurement and compensation issues may be better explained by other more individual factors, rather than discipline specific traits (Swain, 2004; Kitchen, Spickett-Jones, and Grimes, 2007). Other factors such as education, the number of years employed in the communication industry

and the size of the marketing communication agency may also effect practitioners' perceptions of IMC.

H2: Across both Advertising and Public Relations Practitioners, it is hypothesized that education, number of years employed in the communication industry and the size of the marketing communication agency will effect practitioners' perceptions of IMC.

Specifically, It is hypothesized that:

H2a Lower education and length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC is difficult to understand and implement.

H2b Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will positively associated with perception that strong corporate identity aids IMC

H2c Higher education and length of employment will be positively associated with perception of that the more integrated the communication, the more it will be recalled by consumers

H2d Higher education and higher length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC is one voice/one look

H2e Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC is a strategic way of thinking

H2f Higher education and length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC produces long term effects on brand equity

H2g Higher education and length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC only happens with support of CEO

H2h Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception Ad and PR agencies think differently

H2i Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC is managed by one person in agency

H2j Lower education and length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC is sole responsibility of client

H2k Lower length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC managed by one person in client firm

H2j Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC provides new organizational efficiencies

H2l Higher education, higher length of employment and lower size of agency will be positively associated with perception that in 5 years, com pros doing both ad & PR

H2m Higher education, higher length of employment and lower size of agency will be positively associated with perception that in 5 years, com pros more generalist role

H2o Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that Ad & PR require very different skills

H2p Lower education and length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC makes no sense from practical standpoint

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

To collect the data, a closed-ended questionnaire sent to senior advertising and public relations practitioners asked respondents to state their degree of agreement or disagreement with specific statements about IMC. The items on the questionnaire relating to perceptions of IMC were taken from a twice tested instrument (Rose and Miller, 1994; Rose, 1996), reported in the literature review.

A database of senior decision makers in Australian advertising and public relations firms was assembled from professional associations, industry press, the AdNews Handbook and a university database. In total, 240 names and positions of senior advertising and public relations consultants were collated and checked through telephone calls. A mailout was sent out, followed by an email two weeks later. From this, 87 responses were gathered (43 advertising and 44 public relations), yielding a response rate of 36%.

The findings are summarized in Table 2, which shows the responses made by advertising and PR practitioners to a range of statements about IMC. These statements, drawn from the literature review, investigate the management and implementation issues, the expected benefits of IMC and perceived differences in the changing roles of advertising and PR practitioners. In this table, the mean response is indicated, where 1= strong agreement and 5=strong disagreement.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Most practitioners (51.2% of advertising and 50% of PR practitioners) do not consider that IMC is a difficult concept to understand and implement and strongly believe

that it makes great sense from a practical standpoint. Results show respondents agree with many of the ideas from previous studies and developmental concepts of IMC, expressed in the literature review, and believe that a strong corporate identity aids IMC and that IMC produces a long term effect on brand equity. They share a common belief that IMC provides new organizational energies, but it only happens with the support of the CEO. They also concur with the literature that greater integration encourages greater recall.

In terms of the strategy, 90.9% of PR practitioners compared with 74.4% advertising practitioners considered that IMC was a strategic way of thinking. The strong agreement from each discipline was almost identical (48.8% advertising and 50% PR), but more advertising practitioners took a neutral stance (16.3% compared to 6.8%) and there was slightly more disagreement (7% advertising and 2.3% PR).

If we then look at the tactics, 55.8% of advertising and 63.6% of PR practitioner agreed (37.2% and 22.7% strongly) that IMC is all about one look and one voice – the tactics. So also in accordance with the literature, the practitioners see IMC as both a strategy and a tactic.

The strategic importance of IMC to PR practitioners is supported by the centrality of the CEO to the process. Results show that 75% of PR, compared with 58.2% of advertising practitioners, believe that IMC only happens with the support of the CEO. Furthermore, 16.3% of advertising practitioners disagreed with this statement compared to only 6.8% of PR practitioners. Perhaps this is due to the fact that PR firms often answer to the CEO, rather than the marketing manager.

There are differences in the advertising and PR practitioners' perceptions of IMC and the literature on an important point - the management of the IMC process. While the literature suggests that a single IMC manager is a measure of the integration of the marketing communication program (Low, 2000; Duncan and Everett, 1993), less than half of the advertising (46.5%) and PR (36.4%) practitioners believe that IMC should be managed by one specific person in the client organization. In the marketing communication agency, itself, most advertising practitioners (51.2%) compared to only 25% of PR practitioners believe that IMC should be managed by more than one person. Perhaps this is indicative of more of a team approach to advertising.

Looking ahead, 30.5% of advertising practitioners compared with almost half (45.5%) of public relations practitioners disagreed that in five years time both advertising and PR practitioners will be doing a combination of advertising and PR roles. Further, 39.6% of advertising practitioners and 56.8% of PR practitioners disagreed that communication professionals will be more generalists in five years time.

While the study has revealed some important descriptive differences in the perception of advertising and PR practitioners to IMC, it has only revealed one statistically significant point of difference, lending support to Hypothesis 1. Using Levene Test for Equality of Variances, there was a significant difference (.027) between advertising and public relations practitioners on the statement that advertising agencies and PR firms think differently about IMC (refer Table 3). No statistically significant differences were found for the other variables.

Results show that advertising and PR practitioners think differently about each other's perception of IMC. Twice as many PR practitioners as advertising practitioners

strongly agreed that advertising and PR think differently about IMC. Similarly, almost twice as many PR practitioners as advertising practitioners strongly agreed that advertising and PR require very different skills. This would suggest that PR practitioners tend to think of themselves as a different breed of marketing communicator, requiring different skills and thinking about IMC differently from their advertising colleagues. Most perceive that their role will not evolve into a more generalist role in the future. They see themselves as a separate discipline, which possess skills and thinking different from advertising practitioners and communication professionals. This is ironic given that their perception disagrees with the findings of this study, which found no points of significant difference between the advertising and PR practitioners' perceptions of basic IMC concepts.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

To test Hypotheses 2a-2p, simple and multiple regression analyses were employed to examine the effect of education, length of time in the communication industry and the size of the practitioner organization on IMC perceptions (Refer Table 4). Findings show that there is a positive relationship between the size of an agency and the perception that IMC is difficult to understand and implement. However, experience and education had no significant effect. Thus Hypothesis 2a is only partially supported. Results also show that size of an agency influences perceptions that IMC makes no sense from a practical standpoint which partially supports Hypothesis 2p. Education was found to be influential in perceptions that: IMC is managed by one person in the agency (Hypothesis 2i), IMC is the sole responsibility of the client (Hypothesis 2j), and IMC provides new efficiencies

(Hypothesis 2l). Results show that experience is also influential on perceptions that IMC provides new organizational efficiencies (Hypothesis 2l). Moreover it was found that experience positively relates to perceptions that in five years, communication professionals will be doing both advertising and public relations (Hypothesis 2m) and that they will have a more generalist role (Hypothesis 2n). All other hypothesis were not supported.

In summary, some significant differences were found in the practitioners' perceptions of the management and the benefits of IMC. Results show that the more educated the practitioner, the more they believed that IMC was the sole responsibility of the client and the greater their belief that IMC offered new organizational efficiencies. Also, the greater the level of education, the stronger was the belief that IMC should be managed by a single person within the client organization.

In terms of implementation, the larger the organization at which the practitioner worked, the stronger the belief that IMC was difficult to implement and the greater likelihood of their belief that IMC made no sense from a practical standpoint. Those who had worked longest in the communication industry, most strongly believed that within the next five years, communication generalists would be doing both advertising and public relations roles.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

This research raises many important questions for the basic process of integration and the future of the marketing communication professional.

How do the perceptions of Australian advertising and PR practitioners compare with the literature?

This study demonstrated many shared perceptions between the marketing communications thinking and the literature. Respondents believe that IMC makes sense from a practical standpoint, and is enhanced by a strong corporate identity and CEO support. In terms of the effect of IMC, they believe that IMC generates organizational efficiencies, has a long term effect on brand equity and that greater integration leads to greater recall. They also concede that IMC is both strategic and tactical. From the client side in the IMC process, both professional groups support the involvement of more than one manager. This finding contrasts with the literature which proposes a single client contact as a measure of integration.

The idea of a communication generalist suggested in the literature receives little support in this study. PR professionals, in particular, consider themselves to be a very distinct discipline, possessing very different skills and attitudes to their advertising counterparts.

Can we integrate when we think the other marketing communications partners think differently?

Most of the perceptions of the advertising and public relations practitioners of the basic process of IMC are similar to each other and the literature. In terms of what IMC is,

how it is implemented and what effect it produces, there is concurrence in thought and understanding between the two disciplines. Despite having similar perceptions, however, the two disciplines still believe that they think differently about IMC. This difference, although not reflected through the rest of their answers in the questionnaire, still exists in their minds and in their disciplines. Perhaps this perception is secondary to the fact that they are both operating from the same premise regarding IMC and is of no consequence in the day to day planning and implementation of IMC. However, it could be that this perceived difference between the disciplines, rather than their understanding of IMC, is the main obstacle to seamless integration amongst marketing communication professionals in Australia today.

Will a communication generalist emerge? And if so, from where?

The public relations practitioners define themselves more strongly as a unique breed of marketing communicator. They see themselves as a separate and distinct discipline, which possesses different skills and mindset about IMC than their advertising colleagues. The majority of senior PR practitioners do not see their evolution into a communication generalist in the next five years. This may be a result of their strong professional organization in Australia.

In contrast, advertising was perhaps the first marketing communication discipline to feel the changes in the marketplace, triggered by shifts in mass media dollars and evidenced by their involvement in defining the concept of IMC (AAAA 1989). This may have encouraged advertising practitioners to be more receptive to the idea of a communication generalist.

Another place from which the communication generalist may emerge is from the many universities teaching IMC. Or as Low (2000) proposes perhaps we will see the rise of a client generalist working internally within the organization.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

One limitation of this study which could be addressed by further research is that fact that only advertising and PR practitioners were included. It would be valuable to see whether their perceptions of IMC and of each other extends to other marketing communication partners, such as direct marketers or sales promotion professionals.

A second limitation of this study is that it is based in Australia and may reflect the conditions of the marketplace and the status of the two marketing communication disciplines in that country. However, this study adds to our growing understanding of IMC internationally, helping to identify the situation specific and context dependent factors which may be an artifact of the Australian marketplace.

Additionally, it would be interesting to track the attitudes of the two disciplines to see whether they ever stopped thinking about each other as different.

CONCLUSION

This study raises a notable IMC conundrum facing marketing communication partners in Australia. Even though advertising and PR practitioners share a similar understanding of IMC, they do not believe they do.

Will the facts presented here change their perception? Will the disciplines shift their focus? Will a stronger working relationship between the marketing communication partners show their similarity of thought and purpose? Or will advertising and PR practitioners always think they are different – even when they think the same? Future research opportunities exist to undertake qualitative studies that will investigate these questions further.

REFERENCES

- Caywood, C., Schultz, D. & Wang, P. (1991). Integrated Marketing Communications: A Survey of National Consumer Goods Advertisers. *Northwestern University report*, June, 1991.
- Duncan, T., & Everett, S., (1993). Client perceptions of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 33 (3), 30.
- Eagle, L., Kitchen, P., & Bulmer, S., (2007). Insights into interpreting integrated marketing communications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41 (7/8), 956-970.
- Eagle, L., & Kitchen, P., (2000). IMC, brand communications and corporate cultures: client/agency coordination and cohesion. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37 (1), 667-686.
- Eagle, L., Kitchen, P., & Hyde, K., (1999). Perceptions of Integrated Marketing Communications among marketers and ad agency executives in New Zealand. *International Journal of Advertising*, 18 (1).
- Gould, S., Lerman, D., & Grein, A., (1999). Agency perceptions and practices on Global IMC. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 39 (1), 7-21.
- Gould, S., (2000). The state of IMC research and applications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40 (5).
- Kerr, G., Patti, C., & Chien, M., (2004). Integrated Marketing Communication: New discipline with an old learning approach: A syllabi analysis. *Conference Proceedings*. Wellington, New Zealand: Australia and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference.
- Kim, I., Han, D., & Schultz, D., (2004). Understanding the diffusion of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44 (1).

- Kitchen, P., Spickett-Jones, T., & Grimes, R., (2007). Inhibition of brand integration amidst changing agency structures. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 13 (2), 149-168.
- Kitchen, P., & Li, T., (2005). Perceptions of integrated marketing communication: A Chinese ad and PR agency perspective. *International Journal of Advertising*, 24 (1), 51-78.
- Kitchen, P., Schultz, D., Kim, I., Han, D., & Li, T., (2004). Will agencies ever “get” (or understand IMC? *European Journal of Marketing*, 38 (11/12), 1417-1436.
- Kitchen, P., & Schultz, D., (1998). IMC: A UK ad agency perspective. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14 (2), 465-485.
- Kitchen, P., & Schultz, D., (1999). A multi-country comparison of the drive for IMC. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 39 (1), 21-38.
- Low, G., (2000). Correlates of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40 (3), 27.
- McArthur, D., & Griffin, T., (1997). A marketing management view of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 37 (5).
- Patti, C., Kerr, G., & Schultz, D., (2005). Integrated Marketing Communication: International Learning and Teaching, *Conference Proceedings*. Hong Kong: American Academy of Advertising, Asia-Pacific Conference.
- Phelps, J., Plumley, J., & Johnson, E., (1994). Integrated Marketing Communications: Who is Doing What? *Conference Proceedings*. USA: American Academy of Advertising Conference.

Phelps, J., Harris, T., & Johnson, E., (1996). Exploring decision-making approaches and responsibility for developing Marketing Communications Strategy. *Journal of Business Research*, 37.

Rose, P., & Miller, D., (1994). Merging Advertising and PR: Integrated Marketing Communications. *Journalism Educator*, 49 (2).

Rose, P., (1996). Practitioner opinions and interests regarding integrated marketing communications in selected Latin American countries. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 2 (1), 125-39.

Schultz, D., & Schultz, H., (2004). *IMC: The Next Generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Schultz, D., & Kitchen, P., (1997). Integrated Marketing Communication in US Agencies: An exploratory study. *Journal of Advertising Research*. 37 (5), 7-19.

Swain, W., (2004). Perceptions of IMC after a Decade of Development: Who's at the Wheel, and How Can We Measure Success? *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44 (1), 46.

TABLE 1. Advertising Agency versus Client, Academics and Public Relations Perceptions of IMC

Year	Writer	Topic	Method	Findings
1994	Rose & Miller	Ad and PR Practitioner opinions of IMC	Survey of US adv/PR practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . IMC is practical, growing reality . Practitioner will become more of a generalist, combining adv/PR skills
1996	Rose	Ad and PR Practitioner opinions in Latin America	Survey of 143 advertising and PR practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . IMC is practical necessity . Advertising and PR practitioners combine in more generalist role. . Beliefs in IMC do not have same level of conviction as US
1999	Eagle, Kitchen & Hyde	Ad and Client Perceptions of IMC in New Zealand	Survey of 59 Advertising Agency Executives and 87 Clients in New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Use advertising measures to evaluate IMC . Difficulties in isolating effects of individual marcom vehicles . Ad Agencies not the source of most new marcom ideas nor only provider of client needs . 87% clients coordinate IMC . Advertising is most integrated discipline, followed by DM, Sales Promotion, PR
2000	Eagle & Kitchen	Ad and Client Perceptions	Survey of 19 Ad Agency Execs & 24 Clients in New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Strong commitment to IMC by agency and client, IMC valuable concept. . No significant difference in perceptions between agency and client on definition or barriers. . Need for good working relationship.
2004	Kim, Han & Schultz	Perceptions and implementation of IMC of Ad agencies and clients	Survey of 109 members of Korean Advertising Association and 109 of top 200 companies listed in Korea Business Annual (1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Agency staff have better understanding of IMC than clients. . Strong agreement from ad practitioners and clients that IMC was a necessary and useful new strategy worth adopting. . 42% agencies and 35% clients already used IMC. . Agencies had higher hopes and expectations of IMC as improving their marketing practices . Agreement that IMC means staff will need to learn new skills and become more of a generalist. . Both agencies and clients saw barriers in business practice and agency relations, with clients in particular being concerned with increased power of advertising agencies and less competition between agencies. . Lack of consensus with 81.7% of clients believed they should control IMC, and 68.8% of agencies believed the agency should control process. . Business culture of 'sister companies' a barrier to cooperative integration, particularly for clients. . High agency acceptance for fee based payment system.
2004	Swain	Perceptions of Ad, Clients and Academics of IMC after decade of development	Survey to 185 clients, agencies and academics in US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . No consensus on who leads implementation. . Agencies and clients considered traditional measurement appropriate for IMC, while academics prefer communication measures. . Professionals prefer fees and communication outcomes as compensation methods for IMC. . Compensation and measurement less developed than IMC definition and leadership. . Perceptual differences on measurement and compensation.
2004	Kitchen, Schultz, Kim Han and Li	UK Ad and PR perceptions	Survey of 80 IPA and 27 PRCA members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . No significant difference between ad and PR practitioners on key statements about IMC. . Greatest problem in developing IMC campaigns is different marketing communication agencies working together. . Ad agencies see role expanding to cover other marcom activities
2005	Kitchen & Li	Agency perceptions of IMC in China	Survey of 60 advertising agencies and 23 PR agencies in and around Beijing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . 83% advertising agencies 70% of PR offered IMC services . Advertising agencies more likely to see IMC as strategic, PR see it as a tactic . Advertising most important IMC tool, PR second . Client understandings of IMC considered most important factor for development of successful IMC by both Ad and PR practitioners . No consensus on who leads implementation . Commission and fees both common means of payment, acceptance of performance-based payment in future. . One third ad agencies and 17% PR agencies always measure IMC effectiveness. Only 9% ad & 21% PR use standardized measurement metric.

TABLE 2. Mean of responses by Advertising and PR Practitioners

	Advertising Practitioners	PR Practitioners	SD
Difficult to understand and implement	3.44	3.41	1.29
Strong corporate identity aids IMC	1.65	1.64	0.76
Greater integration, greater recall	1.72	1.84	0.92
IMC is one voice/one look	2.33	2.45	1.32
Strategic way of thinking	1.77	1.64	0.90
Produces long term effects on brand equity	1.74	1.73	0.88
Only happens with support of CEO	2.21	1.91	1.10
Ad and PR agencies think differently	2.37	1.89	1.03
IMC managed by one person in agency	3.26	2.98	1.33
IMC is sole responsibility of client	4.33	4.14	1.04
IMC managed by one person in client firm	3.14	2.93	1.307
Provides new organizational efficiencies	2.30	2.34	1.02
In 5 years, com pros doing both ad & PR	3.07	3.32	1.29
In 5 years, com pros more generalist role	3.26	3.59	1.27
Ad & PR require very different skills	1.95	2.00	1.01
Makes no sense from practical standpoint	4.35	4.39	0.88

TABLE 3. Results of t-test for perceptions that Advertising and PR Practitioners think differently about IMC

t-tests for independent samples				
Variables	No of cases	Mean	Standard deviation	Equality of means t-value
Advertising Practitioners	43	2.37	1.092	1.125*
PR Practitioners	44	1.89	.920	

*Significance $\leq .05$ level

TABLE 4. Results of regression analyses of individual factors influencing perceptions of IMC

Effect of lower education and length of employment and size of on perceptions that that IMC is difficult to understand and implement.			
Adj R Square = .048	F= 2.442		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.104	-.981	.329
Education	.118	1.074	.286
Size of Agency	.222	2.013	.047
Effect of higher education, length of employment and size of agency will positively associated with perception that strong corporate identity aids IMC			
Adj R Square = .013	F= 0.640		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.014	-.127	.900
Education	.146	1.291	.200
Size of agency	.014	.126	.900
Effect of higher education and length of employment will be positively associated with perception of that the more integrated the communication, the more it will be recalled by consumers			
Adj R Square = -.022	F= .083		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.029	.264	.792
Education	.032	.292	.771
Higher education and higher length of employment will be positively associated with perception that IMC is one voice/one look			
Adj R Square = .020	F= 1.885		Sig .138
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.192	1.796	.076
Education	.067	.622	.536
Higher education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC is a strategic way of thinking			
Adj R Square = .022	F= 1.656		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.138	-1.281	.204
Education	.186	1.670	.099
Size of agency	-.120	-1.070	.288
Effect of higher education and length of employment on perception that IMC produces long term effects on brand equity			
Adj R Square = -.021	F= .100		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.046	-.418	.677
Education	.014	.128	.899
Effect of higher education and length of employment on perception that IMC only happens with support of CEO			
Adj R Square = .002	F= 1.075		Sig .002
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.114	-1.053	.295
Education	.117	1.086	.280
Effect of higher education, length of employment and size of agency on perception Ad and PR agencies think differently			
Adj R Square = -.008	F= .769		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.112	-1.025	.309
Education	-.072	-.641	.524
Size of agency	.098	1.169	.246
Effect of higher education, length of employment and size of agency on perception that IMC is managed by one person in agency			
Adj R Square = .036	F= 2.086		Sig .032
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.004	-.036	.971

Education	.234	2.119	.037
Size of agency	.075	.679	.499
Effect of lower education and length of employment on perception that IMC is sole responsibility of client			
Adj R Square = .048	F= 3.181		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.038	.360	.720
Education	.260	2.468	.016
Effect of lower length of employment on perception that IMC managed by one person in client firm			
Adj R Square = -.011	F= .023		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.017	.153	.879
Effect of higher education, length of employment and size of agency on perception that IMC provides new organizational efficiencies			
Adj R Square = .092	F= 3.901		Sig .011
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.241	2.319	.023
Education	.237	2.362	.030
Size of agency	.011	.301	.918
Effect of higher education, higher length of employment and lower size of agency on perception that in five years, communication professional doing advertising & PR			
Adj R Square = .081	F=3.519		Sig .042
Variable	B	t	
Experience	-.323	3.097	.003
Education	.095	.882	.381
Size of agency	-.087	-.803	.424
Effect of higher education, higher length of employment and lower size of agency on perception that in five years, communication professional more generalist role			
Adj R Square = .110	F= 3.405		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.263	2.515	.014
Education	.199	1.842	.069
Size of agency	-.141	-1.297	.198
Effect of higher education, length of employment and size of agency on perception that Advertising & PR require very different skills			
Adj R Square = .024	F= 1.702		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.071	.659	.512
Education	-.016	-.148	.883
Size of agency	.225	2.011	.048
Effect of lower education, length of employment and size of agency will be positively associated with perception that IMC makes no sense from practical standpoint			
Adj R Square = .150	F= 3.968		Sig .000
Variable	B	t	
Experience	.179	1.785	.078
Education	.144	1.388	.169
Size of agency	.293	2.806	.006